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## ABSTRACT

This document contains revised policy and guidelines for the external evaluation of new graduate-level programs in the Oregon University System. Each institution in the Oregon University System that requests a new graduate-level or graduate degree program or a significant new option within an existing graduate program must complete an external review of the proposed program. The purpose of the external review is to consider the program in light of the four goals of the Oregon Board of Higher Education: quality, access, employability, and cost-effectiveness. Criteria include: (1) the needs of Oregon and the state's capacity to respond to social, economic, and environmental challenges and opportunities; (2) student demand that may not be met by existing programs; (3) questions of program duplication; (4) necessary resources; (5) the congruity of the program with the campus mission and its strategic direction; and (6) maximized student access, productivity, and academic quality by collaboration when possible. External reviews must include a site visit by an external review panel, and the requirements of the panel are outlined, including requirements for reporting on the external review. (SLD)

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Oregon  
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## Guidelines for External Review of New Graduate-level Academic Programs

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Approved by the  
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## **Background**

In spring 1988, the Oregon State Board of Higher Education directed staff to provide recommendations for assuring that new graduate programs would meet high standards for quality and nonduplication of effort. Staff collected data during the summer, including information on other states' policies and practices. In winter 1989, the Chancellor asked the Academic Council to consider implications of adopting an external review policy for the State System. The Academic Council established a subcommittee, which developed a draft policy; subsequently, a review procedure was developed (with faculty input). The Academic Council approved the final versions of the policy and guidelines in December 1989, and the Board approved them in January 1990.

The policy and guidelines have met the Board's original objectives well. To date, 31 graduate and professional programs have undergone an external review, which has helped institutions further refine their proposed programs. However, in light of the streamlined academic program-approval process (captured in IMD 2.015), the Board's endorsement of institutional performance indicators, and the recently expanded institutional autonomy, staff have revisited the external review policy and guidelines with the Academic Council and the graduate deans of the larger Oregon University System institutions. As a result, they have been updated, streamlined, and clearly connected to the Board's four overarching goals. Two examples of the kind of changes made in this document are (1) deleting the requirement for external review of centers and institutes and (2) eliminating nonsubstantive process details. Regarding centers and institutes, the original version of the guidelines and policy included review of proposed new nondegree-granting, research-oriented centers and institutes. That approach has not worked well due to the great variety and scope of structures and purposes of these entities. An alternative may be for the Board to delegate authority for establishing new nondegree-granting, research-based centers and institutes below the department level to the campuses, since campuses already have authority to establish their organizational arrangements below the levels of schools/colleges and departments.

Attention is also called to the section *Report and Institution's Response*, which permits an institution to submit for Board consideration a program proposal that does not have the support of the OUS Academic Council or the Chancellor's Office.

The proposed revised policy and guidelines have been reviewed by members of the OUS Academic Council and the Graduate Deans Council, who join staff in recommending them for Board consideration.

On April 21, 2000, the Oregon State Board of Higher Education approved the revised policy and guidelines to be effective immediately.

## **Policy for External Review of New Graduate-Level Academic Programs**

Each Oregon University System institution requesting a new graduate-level professional or graduate degree program, or significant new option within an existing graduate degree program, must complete an external review of the proposed program.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the external review is to consider the proposed program in relation to the Board's four goals – quality, access, employability, and cost-effectiveness – and include evaluation that uses the criteria set forth in IMD 2.015(2) for review of new academic programs. These criteria are:

- The needs of Oregon for higher education and the state's capacity to respond effectively to social, economic, and environmental challenges and opportunities.
- Student demand that may not be met satisfactorily by existing programs.
- Program duplication is primarily of concern at the graduate and professional levels; therefore, a duplicated graduate or professional program must be specifically justified in terms of state's needs, demand, access, and cost-effectiveness.
- The resources necessary for the program are available within existing programs; have been identified within existing budgets and will be reallocated; or will be secured to meet reasonable time lines for implementation, typically within a two-year limitation.
- The congruity of the proposed program with the campus mission and its strategic direction.
- Where appropriate and feasible, the program is a collaboration between two or more institutions that maximizes student access, academic productivity, and quality.

### **Guidelines for External Reviews**

#### **The External Review Panel**

The external review process for a proposed new graduate-level degree program must include a site visit by a panel composed of three highly qualified individuals in the specific field/discipline of the proposed program. Although scholars and professionals from Oregon may be included, the majority of the panel members must be selected from peer institutions outside the state. Only under extraordinary circumstances may an individual from an Oregon University System institution serve on the panel.

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<sup>1</sup> By agreement with the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the Academic Council, the review requirement may be modified or waived if the proposed degree program is closely related to an institution's authorized existing program – for example, adding a Master of Engineering in Civil Engineering where the Master of Science in Civil Engineering is already in place.

The selection of the panel members shall be determined by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, in consultation with the institution, from a list of candidates provided by the proposing institution.

### Institutional Responsibilities

#### *Site Visit*

Invitations to serve on the external review panel and to act as chair are extended by the institution. The institution will provide panel members with (1) the full written program proposal, (2) participating faculty vitae, (3) the projected budget, (4) other supporting or contextual materials, as needed, and (5) a site-visit schedule and itinerary, including all arrangements. All costs associated with the external review will be borne by the institution.

#### *Report and Institution's Response*

On the basis of its visit, review of materials, and panel members' expertise, the panel will make a written report for which guidelines are provided. After receipt of the panel's report, the institution may elect to withdraw the program proposal from further consideration and notify the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs that the external review panel has satisfied its charge.

If the institution wishes to proceed, the academic unit must respond, in writing, to the panel's recommendations and assessments. The revised program proposal, external review report, and any institutional responses will be submitted to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, for consideration by the Academic Council. Subsequently, the review and approval process set forth in IMD 2.015(3) for all new academic programs will be followed, including provision for an institution to submit for Board consideration a program proposal that does not have the support of the Academic Council or the Chancellor's Office.

### External Review Panel Responsibility

The external review panel's primary task is to evaluate, not investigate. All data, information, documentation, and supporting material will be provided by the institution, thus enabling the panel to focus its efforts on the review.

The panel is responsible for preparing the final report in a timely manner. The report will be based primarily on the full panel's evaluation of the written program proposal and the information gathered during the site visit, and will address areas set forth in these guidelines. Once completed, the chair will send the report to the institution president or provost, and graduate dean; a copy will be provided to the academic unit that developed the program proposal.

## *Report Guidelines*

The panel is asked to assess the program within both the present and projected-future contexts.

### *Program*

Please assess:

1. The program objectives and requirements; the mechanisms for program administration and assessment.
2. The program's alignment with the institution's mission and strategic objectives.
3. The depth and breadth of coverage in terms of faculty availability and expertise, regular course offerings and directed study, and access to and use of support resources within and external to the institution.
4. The relationship of this program to undergraduate and other graduate programs at the institution, and other institutions in the state, if appropriate. Consider collaborative arrangements, partnerships, interdisciplinary programs, service functions, joint research projects, support programs, etc.
5. The justification in terms of state needs, demand, access, and cost-effectiveness (if this program represents System duplication).
6. The probable impact of the program on the department or academic unit, as well as its effect on current programs.
7. The program's major strengths and weaknesses.

### *Faculty*

Please assess:

1. The quality of the faculty in terms of training, experience, research, scholarly contributions, ability to generate external support, stature in the field, and qualifications to serve as graduate faculty.
2. The faculty in terms of size, qualifications for area(s) of specialization offered, and the student body served. Include analysis of program sustainability in light of such factors as upcoming retirements, etc.
3. Areas of faculty strength and weakness.
4. Faculty workload, including availability for student advising, research oversight, mentoring, and teaching effectiveness.

5. The credentials, involvement of, and reliance upon support faculty from other departments within the institutions, from other institutions, and/or adjunct faculty.

### *Need*

Please assess:

1. The evidence that there is significant demand for this program.
2. The evidence of sufficient and relevant employment opportunities for graduates of this program.
3. The overall need for the program within the institution, the Oregon University System, state and/or region, and nation.

### *Resources*

Please assess:

1. The adequacy of library, computer, laboratory, and other research facilities and equipment; offices; classrooms; and support services for the program; and, if relevant, the program's utilization of resources outside the institution (e.g., field sites, laboratories, museums, libraries, and cooperative arrangements with other institutions).
2. The proposed budget and any need for new resources to operate the program effectively. Where appropriate, review resources available to support graduate students (e.g., fellowships and other scholarships, teaching and research assistantships).
3. In terms of national standards, the institution's commitment to the program as demonstrated by the number of faculty relative to workload and student numbers, support for faculty by nonacademic personnel (e.g., support, staff, technicians), financial support for students, and funds for faculty research and professional activities (e.g., conferences, visiting lectures).
4. Institution leaders' commitment to this program in the long term.
5. The institution's ability to sustain the program in the foreseeable future along with its current and future projected commitments.



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